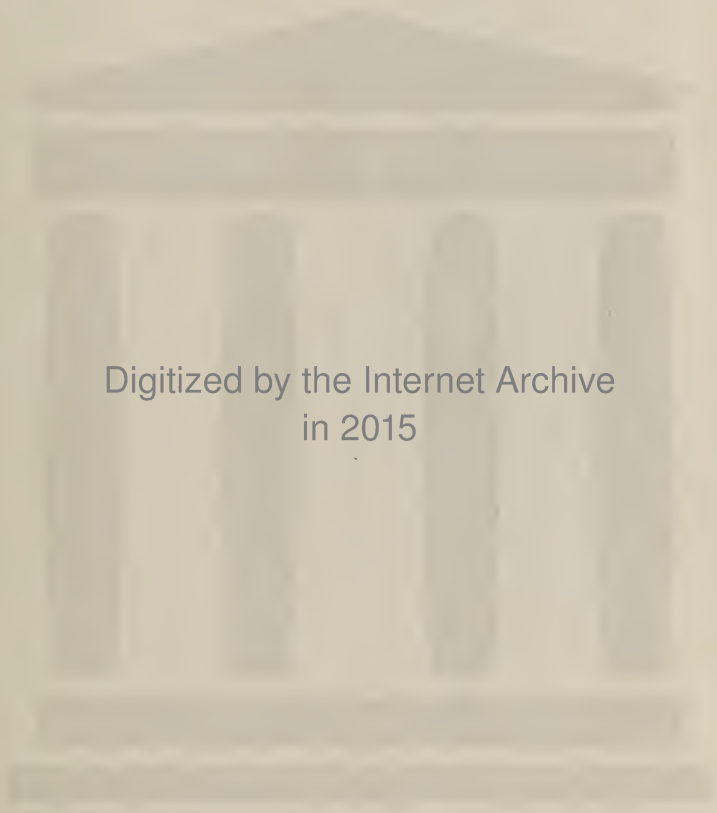


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Missionary Letters and News from Arabia.

January-March, 1902.

NEWS FROM THE FRONT.

REV. JAMES E. MOERDYK.

Mr. C. E. G. Tisdall, agent British and Foreign Bible Society, with headquarters at Bushire, Persian Gulf, after successful and encouraging touring with colporters in Persia has returned to face an obstacle placed in the way of his work as carried on heretofore. The Persian government has issued a new order forbidding all importation of Persian and Arabic Scriptures. Although quite certain of victory, it may be some time before the Bible Society succeeds in obtaining the repeal of this order.

The Mission for Mohammedans in Bombay has adopted the plan "of never baptizing a convert until he is in regular wage-earning employment." They claim for this plan the double advantage—(1) that it tests the convert's motives, and in a measure gives assurance that he will make a "Christian of that independent and self-respecting character which is so essential for the propagation of the Faith—" (2) that it prevents the reproach so often cast against Chinese that they are "Rice-Christians."

The Keith-Falconer Mission at Aden has secured the services as bazaar-preacher of a converted Mohommedan who came to them from Colombo. The man is a native of Chitral and speaks five languages beside his own vernacular. While visiting Colombo as a trader he met the Rev. J. Ireland Jones who spoke to him about Christ and instructed him in the Scriptures. The man soon began to reason out of the Scriptures with other Mohommedans in Colombo, and has continued steadfast. He and his wife were afterwards baptized in Aden.

Your missionaries at the stations in Arabia have been greatly amused with tales from home which tell us that few realize how far apart we live and what a trip between stations means. Busrah is about as far from Bahrein as Chicago is from Minneapolis. Muscat is farther away from Bahrein. A mail and passenger steamer arrives at and leaves Bahrein once in every two weeks only. One spends as much time here in traveling per steamer from one station to the next as he spends at home in making two return trips between Chicago and New York.

Rev. Dr. Young, of the Keith-Falconer Mission at Aden, attempted a trip inland to Sanaa by way of Hodeidah, but was turned back by the Turks at the latter place.

England has opened a post-office at Makalla, a promising place on the southern coast of Arabia.

A weekly prayer meeting is held for women at Bahrein station. Seven or eight Muslim women attend quite regularly.

Dr. Sutton, of the C. M. S. Mission at Mosul in northern Arabia, writes that the medical work there has opened with more patients than he can treat satisfactorily under existing conditions. "One morning the streets leading to the dispensary were lined for several hundred yards by crowds of sick. There seemed to be about 500."

The Mason Memorial Hospital at Bahrein is building. With abundance of building material purchased and delivered on the ground, and contracts with masons and others signed and filed, we look forward to a successful summer's work.

One paper published in India tells us that the British government's policy at Kuwait in Arabia is to maintain the "status quo." Four warships are at Kuwait, and trenches have been dug round the place. From a second paper we learn that prominent men in

India have said that the sooner Great Britain openly proclaims her suzerainty at Kuwait the better it will be for all.

Our colporters at Muscat, Bahrein and Busrah made tours to the number of eighty in 1901. "They have traveled on donkeys, camels, and in native sail-boats, traversing distances which are equivalent to more than two times the number of miles between Liverpool and New York along the track of the great ocean steamers.



VIEW OF MUSCAT, OUTSIDE THE WALLS, LOOKING INLAND.

The missionary at Muscat reports progress in the building of the mission-house at that place. Two more months of successful building and the task will have been completed.

Dr. S. J. Thoms has begun a weekly dispensary at Moharrak, Bahrein Islands. He reports twenty-five or thirty patients, and little or no disturbance in the bazaar street.

UNDER THE YELLOW FLAG.

REV. S. M. ZWEMER, D.D.

The annual meeting of our mission is held as early as possible in the new year. Last year we met at Bahrein; this year for several reasons it was thought best to meet at Busrah. The British India steamer that left Bahrein on January 14th had all the delegates on board. Except for the welcome presence of Mrs. Worrall it was a male delgation; the Bahrein ladies remained at home and carried on all the work of the station in our absence.

Busrah has still ten days quarantine against Bombay, and the Turk applies this ten days to all Gulf ports for financial ratherr than sanitary reasons. Therefore to save time, the "Classis of Arabia" met in quarantine. Mr. Barny became "infected" with us, by special permission of the quarantine police, and we spent ten happy and busy days together under the yellow flag. Of course we had a cook and a good commisariat through the kindness of Mrs. Barny. Our quarters were not elegant, but fairly comfortable, even when the thermometer went down to 30° F., and the north winds blew down the Shatt el Arab. There were advantages in thus meeting in a desert place apart; no callers, and no interruption to business, as well as a compulsory quorum at all sessions.

We were all glad to welcome the Worralls back to Arabia although their presence could not fill the vacant place of dear Wiersum. We had a short memorial service in his memory, and all through the meetings we felt how great was our loss in the death of so diligent and zealous a worker.

With business sessions regularly twice a day, devotional meetings, and committee reports, you can imagine that time did not drag heavily. The quarantine house for first-class passengers is of one story, and has four rooms with a hallway; you can promenade the roof for exercise or run around the house to get up an appetite. For variety there were insects and a shower of rain that made the roof leak!

I wish all of our contributors could have been present and could have heard the discussions of the work at our stations. It

was good to learn of inquirers and seekers even in distant villages. Our reports of Scripture and Book Sales were larger than ever before, and new doors for this work have opened during the past year.

Arrangements were made to complete the Muscat house and build the Mason Memorial Hospital at Bahrein. A set of new rules for our colporters was adopted, intended to set forth the ideal and to meet some real difficulties. Two new colporters were engaged by the mission, and we trust they will equal the best of those now on the staff. Their work is one that tries like fire; and wood, hay or stubble men soon give it up. Do remember them in your prayers; they are the vanguard in East Arabia and (most of them) the King's Own. The British and Foreign Bible Society as well as the American Bible Society give a grant-in-aid, without which all this work of distributing the Word of God would be impossible.

The report of medical work for the past year was good, and we all enjoyed hearing Dr. Thom's paper on this topic and its look into the future. The new hospital calls for new energies in this department and makes new demands for men and money. Indeed the need for reinforcements was never so great because the work was never before so promising and so pressing.

Our mission again asks the Board and asks *you* for help to send out to the front immediately: a single medical missionary, a clergyman and two single ladies. Do you realize that even if all of these were to sail next Autumn it would be two years before they could freely use Arabic and begin to reinforce us?

Beside the strictly business sessions we had papers on such subjects as, "Vacations and Furloughs," and "The Relation between the Individual Missionary and the Board at Home." This exchange of ideas often results in raising us from the dust of routine to higher ideals of service.

The annual meeting is our only Keswick or Northfield, and we all appreciate the privilege of mutual prayer and counsel. Once out of quarantine we enjoyed the freedom and hospitality of the mission-house, and had a few days left to visit friends and meet Arab acquaintances.

On the day of our adjournment we met to break bread and remember the death of our Saviour who is alive forevermore. Even

under the Turkish flag we could meet in remembrance of Him who sent us as His witnesses. Even under the yellow flag we planned for His kingdom and felt that His banner over us was love.

MISSIONS AND POLITICS IN BUSRAH.

REV. F. J. BARNY.

The important event of the quarter is the re-opening of the medical work after having been closed for more than a year. The importance of this event for our work can hardly be over-estimated. It was a sore disappointment for us last fall, when, instead of learning of Dr. and Mrs. Worrall's departure for the field, the mail brought the news that the lack of funds would delay their return. Now, for joy that the work has re-opened, we have almost forgotten the bitterness of the disappointment. The good friend of the mission into whose heart God put it to pay for the traveling expenses of Dr. Worrall and his wife has done a marked service to the cause of Christ in Arabia. How much of a demand there is for a doctor is shown by the fact that hardly had he arrived when patients began to come and to-day, after a week's opening, there were enough to keep the doctor busy all the morning. So persistent have the people been that it has been impossible to fit up the dispensary properly, but in a few days everything will be in order and the work will be in full swing. Apart from the intrinsic value of this work as a practical example and proof of Christian love it has the greatest possible value in making definite evangelistic work possible. In this station where street preaching is prohibited and proselyting is a state crime an agency that gives the missionary an audience of from thirty to fifty every day is of the first importance. This is what our dispensary does, it brings an audience right to the house where God's word may be expounded under the most favorable circumstances and this is then followed up by as much personal work as the time and strength of the missionaries will permit. This is the reason why the stopping of the medical work a year ago was so much deplored and why we rejoice so much that it has begun again.

History has been making in this part of Arabia during the last six months. The latest news is that there are uprisings of the

Arabs in the Turkish provinces of Hassa and Katar and that an English gun-boat has gone to Katif, the port of Hassa, on official business. Perhaps a brief explanation of the politics of these events will not be out of place here. Though politics is not the sphere of a missionary it would be a mistake to say that missionaries must not pay any attention to the political happenings; for God rules in the world of politics and often His hand is so plain that it cannot be mistaken. The story of what has been transpiring in the last few months goes back to five years ago. At that time, Mubarek usurped the chieftianship of Kuwait (pronounced Kuwait). He murdered his two brothers and became sole sheikh of Kuwait and the dependent tribes. The children of the murdered brothers escaped and came to Busrah where they sought the help of the Turkish authorities with but little apparent success. I say apparent, purposely, for an attack made on Mubarek by Abdul Aziz bin Rashid, ruler of the Nijd, last summer has not a very evident connection with these events, but I have no doubt that it was at the instigation of the Turks that Ibn Rashid attacked Mubarek. These two are both powerful sheikhs ruling over a considerable extent of territory and both independent of the Turkish government. *Divide et impera* is a favorite maxim of the Osmanlis, a principle which they have successfully applied to the task of governing since they had anything to govern. The misdeeds of Mubarek were a convenient pretext for mixing in the affairs of these rulers and playing off one against the other. They would step in at the opportune moment and fully assert their authority. Should the connection of events not be exactly as stated, still the fact is that Mubarek was attacked by Ibn Rashid and lost a large number of men and when he prepared to retaliate the Turkish government interfered. Mubarek finding himself pressed on all sides called in the help of the English with the result as is well known, that Kuwait has become an English protectorate. I believe the English government denies that it has established a protectorate, and as a matter of fact the English flag has not been raised, but it requires considerable skill in finely drawn distinction to show the difference between a protectorate and the English position in Kuwait.

Perhaps we may soon hear of a "Katif affair" involving parts of East Arabia opposite to Bahrein. Certain it is that East Ara-

bia cannot much longer remain as unnoticed and forgotten as during the last hundred years. All who by their knowledge are entitled to prophesy agree that a great game is yet to be played in the Persian Gulf and it seems to be beginning. These events cannot but influence our work and we cannot but think that God is directing them to open up closed doors for His messengers.

BIBLE-WORK IN OMAN.

REV. JAMES CANTINE.

I think we missionaries have written more or less about our own difficulties and trials, and doubtless we get as much sympathy as we deserve, for I fear we do not think enough of our assistants and of *their* special dangers and discouragements. They naturally meet many more hard knocks than do we who are hedged about with the protection which comes from belonging to a superior race; and if our Western Christianity is what we claim, it must also have given us more strength, moral and spiritual to endure and overcome.

To show something of what our men in Oman have to face, I will give a few quotations from the reports of our colporter Said of journeys taken within a few months. He writes as follows:

"Then I traveled that night to Sohar by boat and the next morning went out to the bazaar: and when they saw the books in my hand some of them took them. Then came men from the governor and two soldiers and forbade the people from buying by saying 'these are unbelievers' books,' and they forbade me selling them and the people returned the books and took their value from me. A man then came and buying a Proverbs and paying me for it afterwards tore it up before my face. Some reviled me and threatened me with a beating and one drew his knife to strike me, but the others held him and there was a great uproar in the street. I gathered up the torn leaves and went away to another part of the town, but they followed after, reviling and threatening, and one drew his pistol. Then I entered the shop of one who sold sweets and bought some and sat down and ate, saying, 'perhaps by my entering the shop they will depart from me,' but they increased in numbers and anger. I had before left some

books in one of the shops and they went and seized them and tore them up before me, and some came upon me in the shop but the owner turned them out. . . . At evening time they sent me out of the bazaar, so I remained outside talking with some men with gentleness and without anger ; then I returned to the bazaar without books and sitting down in a shop talked on religious subjects with men who were learned and wise, and they said, ' what do you believe ' and I repeated for them the creed ; then they asked about things lawful and I repeated the commandments, then they said it is not possible that evil should come from this person. There came a man and seized my hand from behind saying, ' go away from the bazaar, I warn you, for they wish to kill you this night if they find you alone,' and I said, ' He who is with me is stronger than they who are against me.' And while we were talking two men came asking about me and when they saw me they said, ' get up and come with us, for you have blasphemed the the prophet'—and they were soldiers come to take me to the judge. When the men in the shop heard it they dissuaded them by saying, ' it is not possible that there be from this man such a sin,' and there came other witnesses who said it was not I who blasphemed but another Christian who was with them before. So I returned to my place, praising God for what he had done for me. A couple of days later he writes : ' We reached Ghatura at night and in the morning I earnestly endeavored to find a place to put my bags but I could not, and in the coffee shops they would not let me stay, and not in the street, and when I put my bags before a public resting place the owner came out and said, ' I do not wish you to remain near me, see for yourself a place,' but I was not able to find a place for all men said I was unclean. The baker would sell me bread but he would give me no water, and I remained all day in the sun and at night on the sea shore by myself. There I was two nights and a day without water.

"Of another time and place he says : ' We came to a place called Abuabali and as no one would take us to the sheikh, we hired a vacant hut of date branches. Towards evening I came to the house of a school-mistress with many pupils and here sold all the books I had with me, and returned for more and sold many. Then I prepared for sleep and rejoiced greatly saying, with this beginning, to-morrow I will sell a hundred. But the enemy came

and sowed tares among the good seed and they sprang up at once and choked the good. What a bitter night it was that I spent in that place, for soon a number of the rude people, small and great, women and men, girls and boys, came with great crying and surrounded the hut, throwing stones upon it, and because it was built of date branches it was being broken and falling in upon us. When I went out to them they threw the books at me and threatened to beat me. They remained half the night and at last the owner of the hut rescued us, not from mercy but to save his own property. And truly was our night greater than the night of Lot at Sodom, for upon him came together the men of the city but upon us also women and girls.'

"On his return journey through this place he attempted to dispel the first sad impression by calling upon the sheikh, but his reception was lacking in hospitality, for he says: 'No matter how much we asked for the house of the sheikh, no one would tell us until a little black girl led us to it. We found he was not at home but at the mosque to which we then went. After we had made our salaams we asked him for a place to sleep and he promised to give us a place after he had finished his prayers: so we sat down outside to wait, but after two hours he had not come out and I heard them saying 'Christians are unclean, how can we give them a place.' Then at last he came out but would not look at us or speak to us and we had to travel on far to the next village.'

At a later date he had a very uncomfortable time at a village misnamed Sarur (happiness). He writes: "We arrived at Sarur and descended at the house of a Balooche, and after a little I took books and went to the bazaar and sold two. In the evening I went again and at first I had good talk with the men, but afterwards they met me and after buying books they tore them up before me immediately and began to revile me. I walked away but they overtook me and spit upon me and stoned me until I arrived at the house in which I was staying. Here they returned upon me about nine o'clock at night and wanted books so that they might get me outside and among them to do according to their wicked hearts. The people of the house did not let me go outside or let them have books, and for all that they could do they could not get to me, and for over two hours they remained about

the house. The next day I also went about and sold books, but for the three days I was there they did not cease to persecute me."

I think I have quoted enough to show you something of the difficulties in the way of colportage in Oman. In all these instances Said was alone except for a Mohammedan assistant and donkey driver. He is not wont to exaggerate his trials or to shirk responsibility, and in these regions where life is notoriously cheap and where there is constant robbery and bloodshed, there are few native Christians who would venture what he has undertaken so cheerfully. He certainly is well equipped with patience and gentleness and experience, but it has been as he says only the power and goodness of God that has kept him safely. Seeing how important his work is, beyond anything that we missionaries can do, will you not petition the Master that he may be kept always in health and safety, and that a rich blessing may follow his life?

A DAY IN MOHARREK.

SHARON J. THOMS, M.D.

If you have read Dr. Zwemer's book on Arabia you will know that Moharrek is one of the Bahrein Islands, and has this name, probably, because long ago when there were many Hindus here they burned their dead on that island. The word means a place of burning.

The ruler and all the nobility live at that place, and they have prevented us from opening a book-shop there, but as I have treated many patients from there we had no trouble renting a shop for a dispensary, and we propose to spend one day a week there throughout the year. Of course we and our colporters sell Bibles to patients and others who will buy. We shall keep Bibles and other books, and we hope, later in the year, to have the shop open for the sale of Scriptures more than one day a week.

The first day I treated eighteen patients, the second thirty, and yesterday I treated forty, and an Arab whom I am treating offers to give us a larger shop free of charge for one year.

When we had our medicines unpacked and arranged, and the record book opened on a box which answered for a table, a crowd

had gathered before the door. Most of these were only loafers curious to see what we were going to do. Some had aches and pains or bad eyes to be treated, and each waited for another to come up first, but finally they began to come in. After they had told their story and were examined they were treated. Some came up with their arms extended that the doctor might feel their pulse, for they have an idea that a doctor needs only to feel the



VIEW FROM MISSION HOUSE, BAHREIN, LOOKING NORTHEAST TOWARD MOHARREK.

pulse to know their exact condition, including all their aches and pains.

A man came to have me see his eyes, and after examining them I attempted to put some medicine in them with a medicine dropper when he objected because he had eaten fish for breakfast, and they think that medicine will not be beneficial if they eat fish while they are being treated, and when I give them medicine to take they generally ask if they may eat fish, and are greatly sur-

prised when they are told that they may. As fish is their principal article of food they are generally much pleased to know that they may eat it while taking treatment.

They also often have an idea that their sickness comes from a bad odor inhaled some time before, and they often tell me that on that day or even weeks before they inhaled an offensive odor and of course became sick. Bedouins often come to us with their nostrils stuffed full of rags on that account. Many of the odors one gets in the narrow dirty streets, which are very offensive to us, are not noticed by the Arabs, and to them only certain odors, such as that from decayed fish, are harmful.

I pulled four or five teeth while an Arab friend was sitting in the shop, and he expressed great surprise at the apparent ease with which they were drawn, and said that it would take a barber three hours and four men to help him and then he would break the tops off. This was an exaggeration regarding the time, but regarding the number of helpers necessary and the accident that so often happens he spoke the truth. The barber sits on the patient's breast and four men hold his hands and feet while the barber pries and pulls for several minutes finally often breaking the crown, then the man comes to us to have the roots pulled out.

Sometimes when they have a tooth-ache they hire a Mullah to read over it from the Koran. The Mullah sits before the patient and reads as rapidly as he can. The patient sometimes falls asleep in this way, but when he awakes it is aching as badly as before and he hires the Mullah to read again. One day I pulled a very large tooth that required all my strength, and they told me that the reason this one came so hard was that a year previously it had been read over!

This ignorance and superstition is often pitiful, and the task of teaching such people is not an easy one.

Bigotry and self-righteousness are the thorns and thistles which prevent the growth of the seed. Will you pray that we may ever be faithful in the sowing and that our faith may never waver, for His Word will not return unto Him void, but the harvest will come in His own season.

N. B.—The Arabian Mission depends for its support and the extension of its work, not on the treasury of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America, though under its care and administration, but upon contributions specifically made for this purpose. The churches, societies and individuals subscribing are not confined to the Reformed Church. Members of other denominations are among its supporters and its missionaries. Regular gifts and special donations are invited from all who are interested in Mission work in Arabia. Regular contributors will receive quarterly letters and annual reports, without application. All contributions, or applications for literature or information, should be sent to "THE ARABIAN MISSION," 25 East 22d Street, New York.

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